

Input wanted on proposed S.R. 35 improvements

By SONNI SCHWINN
Herald Correspondent

HEBER CITY — The U.S. Corps of Engineers is asking for comments from the public on the effects of the proposed improvements on State Road 35 (Wolf Creek Rd.) on wetlands.

The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) plans to improve 24 miles of the road that is mainly on the Uinta National Forest and connects Hanna and Woodland. The preferred alternative described in the USFS environmental impact statement, Alternative D, would affect a total of 5.1 acres of wetlands and 3.1 acres of riparian habitat.

The USFS has applied for a Section 404 permit from the Corps, which is required in order to fill 2.53 acres of wetlands at four sites

and build three culverted crossings across the Provo River during the first phase of construction.

The loss of wetlands in the first phase would be mitigated by creating a total 2.93 acres of wetland in five locations.

The Corps is soliciting public comments that will be considered in determining whether to issue, modify, or deny a 404 permit. Public input will be used to assess such issues as effects on endangered species, environmental effects, aesthetics, wetlands, cultural values, fish and wildlife flood hazards, and fish and wildlife.

A 404 permit will be issued if the project complies with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' guidelines. A permit will be issued, based on those

others that apply, unless the district engineer determines it would be contrary to the public interest.

Written comments must be received by July 6. Anyone may submit a request for a public hearing in connection with the 404 permit by stating, in writing, specific reasons why a hearing should be conducted.

Alternative Selected For Wolf Creek Road

The Federal Highway Administration has selected alternative D for improving State Route 35, commonly known as Wolf Creek Rd., as described in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).

The improvements will begin at the end of the pavement 10 miles east of Francis, and extend 24 miles easterly, through the Uinta Forest, to about 0.8 miles east of the North Fork Duchesne River bridge.

The FEIS describes alternative D, which will generally follow the existing corridor, as follows:

- Lanes will be 11 feet wide, with three-foot paved shoulders.
- The design will accommodate 45 mph traffic in the lower areas and 35 mph in the higher areas located in the middle section of the corridor.
- The shoulders will be three feet

narrower than the minimum criteria recommended by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials for a major collector highway and, therefore, the improved road will be less apt to be used by commercial truck drivers than if an alternative had been selected that would have met the association's standards.

• Of all the alternatives that called for complete reconstruction of the road, this will have the least effect on wetlands and the natural ecology.

• Although driving time for this alternative will be a little longer than two of the others, it will still be considerably less than using U.S. 40.

• Scenic quality will improve, as well as access to improved recreation.

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Additional opportunities in the Wasatch and Uinta National Forests, like scenic drives, turnouts for scenic vistas and for hunters and fishermen to park, day-use areas, additional trail access, and improved conditions for bicycling.

Alternative D is expected to accomplish the stated purposes for the project, which include providing safe, functional, more direct access to the Wasatch Front for Duchesne County residents, as well as from the Wasatch Front to the mountain range and Duchesne County for recreationists; easier and better access for forest management; and to complete an unfinished link in the statewide transportation system.

Wolf Creek Road...

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Highway administration selects Wolf Creek Rd. improvement alternative

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forest management; and to complete an unfinished link in the state-wide transportation system.

The improved road will generally follow the existing corridor, with lanes 11 feet wide, and three-foot wide paved shoulders, narrower than the minimum criteria recommended by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials for a major collector highway.

The road will be less apt to be used by commercial truck drivers than if an alternative had been selected that would have met the association's standards.

The design will accommodate 45 mph traffic in the lower areas and 35 mph in the higher areas located in the middle section of the corridor. Of all the alternatives that called for complete reconstruction of the road, alternative D will have the least effect on wetlands and the natural ecology.

Your Tax Dollars at Work; The Other Side of The Mountain

Dear Editor: The Federal Highway Administration announced, as reported on local television, that they will proceed with plans to improve State Road 35 over Wolf Creek Pass. In most situations there are at least two sides to every story. The article in the June 22 issue of *Newsweek* magazine on the waste of taxpayers money to improve the road between Woodland and Hanna is definitely one of these.

You could take any amount out of the federal budget for anything and find someone who would spend that money on something else. The majority of taxpayers who will use this road, from both sides of the mountain, support its completion because it is necessary to commerce and recreation. It has strong support from the federal and state agencies involved. If that writer's line of reasoning was always used, there would never be a road paved anywhere and the country would be tilting toward the Atlantic seaboard because all of our people would still be living on the eastern shore. It is not just the individual road that is important here, it is the network of roads in the whole country that make it such a great place.

Protecting the taxpayers investment is important so maybe that author should consider the cost to highway projects of delaying tactics that add considerably to the cost of their completion. It is also interesting to note here that two beautiful new highways have been built recently directly connecting this area to commercial and recreational areas toward Provo in one direction and to Park City and Salt Lake City in another. Were these

new roads a justifiable expense or a waste of taxpayer money? It depends on who you ask. Did those folks opposing this road oppose those roads? Not a chance!

Probably the most telling statement is his *Newsweek* article is where he states that his place "is the last place before the paved road peters out." Why is it that it's all right for the taxpayers to pave the road to his area but to pave it to the rest of us is a waste of the taxpayers money?

Most of the people who support this project feel that it should be done right the first time. Improve it to minimum AASHTO standards like the previously mentioned new roads and take the dangerous corners out of it. The 50 mph Alternative B plan of the FEIS is the best way to do it if we are at all concerned about the safety of the people traveling it. We all support the needed improvement to the section between Woodland and Francis. One thing is for sure, the Feds aren't going to make either of us completely happy. They will do the project the way they wanted to do it in the first place.

7-8-92
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